

## **Appearances can be captive**

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This communication is about a field experience involving Central Brazil's Xavante performances of "tradition" to Japanese visitors and the participation of this researcher in them.

It comments about the visit of a group of Japanese medicine students to watch rituals and do health examinations on the Xavante people from the Abelhinha village; the preparations for the rituals; the painting of this researcher as a "Xavante"; the games, dances and singing showed as difference markers - and also other performances not noted as such (like pranks) - by the Xavante and the Japanese students. It also talks about the gift giving at the encounter.

Tradition and "tradition" (between quotes, as Manuela Carneiro da Cunha could say) were pulled together at once by the Xavante.

Xavante tradition might be exactly about relating to others. While they act as the others would expect, they also capture the "other", only to recreate more difference towards other "others".

By painting this researcher, calling me to take part on one collective shamanic dance, offering me one of the very gifts that the Japanese students brought to the Xavante themselves, washing me in the river and so on, the Xavante played a small part of the long (and maybe never ending) process of transforming "the other" into "the same".

The "Western" (or "Oriental"?) medicine enters this relation as something to be captured too, which does not eliminate the Xavante medicine. The coexistence between "the other" and "the same" would be a constant part of the Xavante tradition.

## **The Xavante**

I have been researching about the Xavante people since 2002 and finally got to field work with them

by 2008, getting to visit four different “indigenous lands” (that’s the polite word for indigenous “reservations” settled by the Brazilian government to stop their nomad way of life): Sangradouro, São Marcos, Areões and Pimentel Barbosa areas. I actually settled myself to work in two of these areas: Abelhinha village in the Sangradouro area (paying constant visits to the major Sangradouro village too) and Belém village in the Pimentel Barbosa area.

The Xavante have also three more indigenous lands, all of them located in a vast area in the east of Mato Grosso state (Brazil): Marechal Rondon, Marãiwatsede, and Parabubure. All these areas are separated and surrounded by *waradzu* (foreigners, non-indigenous, “white people”) land, cattle and monoculture crop farms. They have been occupying this territory since the beginning of the XX century, before the arrival of the Brazilian modern colonization fronts. But the name “Xavante” has been used since the XVIII century to talk about indigenous people who are said<sup>1</sup> to have a historical continuity to the Xavante of nowadays. (Ravagnani 1991 [1978]).

The Xavante speak a language from the Jê trunk. In their language, they call themselves *A’uwẽ*, wich means “people” or “human”.

Xavante is *one divided* people. They consider themselves, also based on historical written record (Ravagnani 1991 [1978]), to have been separated from the Xerente people (who live west in the Tocantins state, Brazil) – Xerente speak a language alike and call themselves “*Akuwẽ*”. Xavante also recognise differences based on geographical divisions among themselves, but people migrate quite a lot throughout these areas. Besides that, their “kinship and marriage system” (Maybury-Lewis 1984 [1967]) is divided in two exogamous moieties, *Poredza’ono* and *Öwawẽ*. They have also a ritual moiety system that operates with age and time: four alternate nominated age-sets belong to one non-nominated moiety, four other belong to the other moiety, and they oppose in an agonistic fashion during rituals and games, such as log races.

Among many kinds of rituals, the Xavante possess two large ritual complexes: the *Dañono*, linked to the initiation to adulthood and to the age-sets, and the *Wai’a* or *Darini*, related to cure, shamanism and the capturing of generative and external powers.

The dance I took part in the presentations to the Japanese medical students pertains to the *Wai’a*

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<sup>1</sup> I don’t mean to “essentialise” Xavante as a never changing people unit, a “culture” or a “tradition” between quotes (Carneiro da Cunha 2004), even though “essentialisation” might be played by them.

shamanism rituals.

### **The Japanese/Xavante encounter**

I was staying in the Abelhinha village during August, 2008, when I heard the news that a Japanese student group was to arrive in the village for a couple of days stay.

During one *warã* meeting (a night meeting that congregates the men, and sometimes the women around it), Rômulo, the village school director, a Xavante himself and a son of the major family in the village (which adopted me as well, I would learn later), was telling all the children, who were specially called to the *warã* that night, to get prepared for the arrival of the Japanese. They should collect lots of timber for fire (I would do it as well) and should rehearse the dancing and singing that would be shown to the Japanese.

Then, on the next night, many people were brought together to rehearse and play: the school teachers (which belong to the same age-set in which I was adopted too), some '*ritéi'wa* (an age-grade right below mine, of newly initiated warriors), the girls and ladies, the children and I. At some point, the ladies and girls were told to leave the rehearsal and just watch, because some *Wai'a* dances would be practiced and they are not allowed for women.

Then the oldest man in the village, Adão Top'tiro (who I would recognise later as the one who adopted me as his son) transmitted us all a song he had dreamed of, very simple and repetitive, maybe chosen for pedagogical purposes as it would be sung by the children.

In the same night, a '*ritéi'wa* who had given me that day a T-shirt which commemorates his native village (Volta Grande - *Tsaotowawẽ*) told me he is from the *Öwawẽ* clan and asked me if I were a *Poredza'ono* (just like Rômulo and Adão). It was all quite new for me, because I had just arrived in the village in July, and it took some time for me to start being associated by the people (or to notice such association myself) to the *Poredza'ono* clan. I was living by Adão Top'tiro's house and was brought by his younger son, Hipãridi, who is a sort of ambassador or "culture broker" for the Abelhinha village - and for many other Xavante who recognise him as an important person who deals with *waradzu* affairs.

In the next day there were no classes at either schools of the village (the “square” and “round” buildings – both are spaces of the indigenous school in the village run by the mayor of the municipality area in which Abelhinha is located, though the school employs only Xavante personnel). In the afternoon, Rômulo and the teachers called all the children to be painted and adorned for the party in a painting session inside the round school. They also called me to get adorned and one of the teachers, my age-set colleague André Gustavo, called me to be painted too. The process and the result of the painting of my body caused certain awe on them and on me. The painting refers to the *Wai'a* and also to the *'ritéi'wa* lads (for Xavante painting and it's “structural” meaning, see Pollo Müller 1976). But everyone is being painted like that, despite their real age and gender... They also draw certain marks in me to indicate I am “older” than the children there (the teachers were not wearing these marks, though, probably their differences didn't need to be so stressed as mine). Camilo, another teacher and my age-set comrade, answered my questions about the painting telling me the lines painted on my back (or maybe the whole painting, I don't know) meant that I were, then, a “part of [their] culture”!

About the adornments, they told me that everyone, even women during some parties, uses the *tsõrebdzu'a* – a kind of tie normally given by one's father or a mother's brother who acts as a kind of stepfather. Tiuré, a *'ritéi'wa*, told me he has about “ten” of these and André Gustavo said he has a lot too, then he lent me one.

The Japanese arrived in the same afternoon. I learned afterwards that they were three medical students from the Keio University, Tokyo, brought by a Brazilian “nikkei” (a son or a grandson of Japanese immigrants). His father is a teacher at the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) and has known Hipãridi for a long time. They have this annual interchange programme for Japanese students in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of medical school. They usually visit many places, universities and hospitals in Brazil. For some reason they didn't come the year before, though.

After the painting, Adão came to teach the children again, and also the teachers, Tiuré and some other *'ritéi'wa*. Others didn't want to come and get painted, especially the single ladies who would have to undress their chests like the younger girls and were quite embarrassed about it!

André Gustavo answered me that those who didn't want to be painted “wanted to live like the white people”... Even if these ones were there with us, helping, using Xavante techniques of chewing

babassu nuts to produce a painting juice. One of them spitted the juice on my hands and told me to paint Tiuré using some urucum base and coal that they had there.

While that was going on, the few girls who got painted were hiding their chests from everyone's eyes while the dance didn't start. The catholic etiquette towards clothing is now very present in the Xavante life. The Xavante have a formal attitude towards clothing, and dress for the occasion: black or red shorts for the rituals, full football uniforms to play ball, fancier clothes to go to school (even if the school house is located just across the village perimeter), long clothes for farming, black clothes for hunting... Women wear skirts and t-shirts, mostly, dressing quite alike, even if this kind of clothing is not an "aboriginal" one... The right appearance is very valued by the Xavante.

After the whole preparation, Rômulo told me I would play the crook fight with one of the Japanese guys (which didn't actually happened). This is a children's competition game of strength, one might pull the other competitor over to his own court to win. I trained with André Gustavo. And I won – probably thanks to my little kung-fu techniques of the body. André Gustavo wanted to play again so he won back, because the Xavante don't satisfy till they get even, said Rômulo.

Then every one went to the middle of the village for the rituals to take place.

The dances were these: the women nomination dance, hanging the arms strongly besides the body and yelling at the end the typical Xavante yell ("tuuuui!"); the round *dapra* dance in which the dancers have to rapidly drag their legs back and forth, with much strength, "because that's the way the old men like us to do", say the Xavante; a cure dance and chant – in a "real" situation it goes all night long, with a lot of suffering and effort, to cure a sick person and bring joy back to the village – but even this little show was "very serious" and no girls were allowed dancing. Then Rômulo called me to dance the part that should happen in the end of the "real" ceremony, at the sunrise, when there is a change of step in the dance and it becomes a spiralised semi-circle towards the center and in each one of the both ends of the row there is one "shaman" who holds a stick of 'wamãri'<sup>2</sup>.

After the dances the children staged the *Oi'o* (a ritual club fight which happens every year during the rainy season, all children must play, fathers teach them at home) and then two japanese guys were called to play the crook fight with two of the Xavante teachers, who certainly won both

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<sup>2</sup> 'Wamãri is a sort of sacred wood for the Xavante. Sticks like this were used when the first Xavante created the women. It is used to make a special powder to pacify internal wars. It also means "cross", which is the symbol for "roots", eatable and medical ones and also "family" ones as well. One might suggest all this would create an interesting crossing of meanings between the Xavante beliefs and the Cristian symbols.

matches.

These rituals had finished and then new rituals were about to start.

The Japanese took lots of polo shirts to give to the Xavante and two Japanese silk fans. The village's chief mediated the prestations and redistributed the polo shirts to those who participated and also to the viewers (mainly women, because the man who don't take part on the dances should not come out of the house, I guess, based on the Xavante etiquette). Tiuré told me to get one shirt too, but I refused, and he looked disappointed. André Gustavo told me that the Xavante necktie he gave me was mine too.

More gift giving took part inside the "square" school, where school material given by Japanese children was redistributed to the Xavante children. At the school the Xavante kids and youngsters used the material for drawing Xavante "traditional" scenes: the round houses and their fires, the hunting, some animals in the woods, people wearing traditional Xavante painting: I myself drew a Xavante warrior and gave it to André Gustavo. The Japanese also made origami animals and airplanes to the Xavante children.

Before going to the school for the drawing session, we had been to the river for bathing, and Camilo helped me washing, as he had painted me before, I presumed, and so I washed Tiuré's back too. When the Japanese showed up by the river the children started making quite aggressive jokes yelling words like "sayonara!", "arigato!" and "banzai!"<sup>3</sup> – I was happy not to be the target of their bathing jokes and pranks at this time, for a change...

Later on the day the medical students would then do eye exams in all the Xavante for blood pressure, take the blood pressure around the arm too, and test blood drops for glucose rates. They would do it to me as well. Then they would give medical advice for those who were eating too much sugar (as Xavante diet has been changing along the decades, the consume of rice and industrial products, like soft drinks – mainly as ceremonial beverage! – has brought new diseases such as diabetes). As far as I know, no blood sample was taken away.

At last, the question is made: Is this whole "culture show" (or this "total social fact") some kind of

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<sup>3</sup> The reader ought to know that these Xavante children speak mainly Xavante language and can hardly speak Portuguese.

ethnification, a way to “essentialise” native customs?

Well, apparently I would not have the same “ethnicity”, but the way they transformed me by the painting, the adornment and also the ritual practice gave me some of that “ethnicity” too.

Apparently all of this happening involves a certain “tradition” with quotes, as Coelho de Souza (2007) would translate Carneiro da Cunha’s “culture between quotes” (2003) to “tradition between quotes”. That is, an authenticated “unity” identical to itself, a *self-centred* “society” organization, controlled and delimited by the laws of the State. But it is also a tradition “without quotes”, as we shall see, legitimated by its own considerations of centrality and heterocentrality.

### **Children and Ritual**

Aracy Lopes da Silva had already noticed the participation of children in Xavante rituals as though they were there to play and learn (2002: 43). Xavante knowledge, she says, is transmitted to the children through ritual performance, and successive versions of the same ceremony can be re-actualized by memory, guiding the present. “Memory and creation, performance and tradition, all is combined to reaffirm an unique style and patrimony, but always capable of processing and incorporating the challenges of the live historical moment” (Idem, my translation).

For the little ones, taken by the older Xavante to the performance, the ritual's plastic and synthetic language is as seriously expressed as for the older or “real” officials. Lopes da Silva says it defines “groups” of participants, movements, a ritual scene. It also implies learning what to use for body paint, how to do it, the manipulation and the sensations of these vegetable or animal matters and the meaning of the paintings. The performance also synthesizes the learning of the use of ornaments, the physical strength needed to dance under the sun, the body discipline to dance in the right place and in the right way, the singing... Even watching the spectacle can be a learning experience, as Lopes da Silva states (2002: 44).

The very concept of “tradition” to the Xavante, according to a vast study on their myths and thought by Arthur Shaker Eid in close dialog with many Xavante elders – Rupawẽ, Serezabdi, Sereburã, Serenhimirãmi, Hipru, Paulo Supretaprã and Azevedo Prepẽ, who are co-authors of Eid's thesis –, contains the notion of ritual knowledge and play. Their word for this is *dató*, which means “ritual”,

“party”, “play”. They translate it to Portuguese also as “brincadeira” (Eid et alii 2002: 56), a word that means “play”, “game playing”, “frolic”, “fun”, “child's play”... In my experience, when the Xavante make jokes and pranks, they also refer to *dató* or *datoire*, a diminutive word for *dató*. So one may say the Xavante are actual *Homo ludens* (Huizinga 1980 [1938]).

This creates an open meaning for “ritual” and “tradition” to include children's play and their participation as “non-serious” actors. But “non-seriousness” may also contain gravity, severity and truth, as Huizinga would say (1980 [1938]). Therefore, would the participation of a foreigner, a *waradzu*, in such rituals be a serious and real one, or not? Maybe “yes” and “no” would be both correct answers to that question.

### **Forbearers and Foreigners**

Xavante people have their own concept of “authenticity” which informs their ideas about outsiders’ appreciation of their “indigeneity” and their expressive forms, as Laura Graham puts it (Graham 2005: 629). This concept is related to the maintenance of the “culture” or “way of life” (*dahöïmanadzé*, “way of life”) which exists ever since the “beginning” of Xavante life, brought by their ancestors. What makes them Xavante is this “continuity”, expressed by rituals, dream songs (heard in dreams with the forbearers). “For them, 'authenticity' pertains to the *relationship between the past and the present*, and it implies replicating ancestral ways” (Idem, my italics). Claims for authenticity also arise when rival communities compare their selves, measuring the adherence to the *a'uwẽ-höïmanadzé* (Xavante way of life) by pointing out difference markers such as haircut, painting and the practice of rituals.

In my field experience I realized that not every Xavante has the same view about authenticity, considering the use of the term *uptabi* (an emphatic word that means, approximately, “real”, “really”, “authentic”). While in some areas (like in the area of Pimentel Barbosa) people associate the notion of *a'uwẽ uptabi* to the Xavante way of life (in contrast to other indigenous people, or to deviant Xavante that are said to adopt the “white men”'s way of life), other people (some of them from the area of Sangradouro, in this case) say that *a'uwẽ uptabi* is a special kind of Xavante, members of some special lineages which historically are more opened to adopt strangers or people who lost their families and so on; such lineages say they are powerful pacifiers and do not practice witchcraft.



Anyway, when comparing *a'uwẽ-höïmanadzé* to *waradzu-höïmanadzé*, Xavante stress their way of life and their rituals as a fundamental difference: “We are humans [*a'uwẽ*], we have *Ubdöwarã*, we have *Wanoridobe*, we have our way of life [*wahöïmanadzé*], *waradzu* have their own”, said an old man to his comrades once during a night meeting I witnessed, in Xavante language.

*Wanoridobe* is an initiation dance. *Ubdöwarã* is a ceremony involving the making of a special bond among an age-set of new mature men to the teenager class living in the Teenager House (*Hö*). Each teenager chooses a new mature man to be his “sponsor” or “godfather” (in Portuguese they call this man “padrinho”, “godfather”) and a complex exchange of gifts (food, adornments) is made between them, which will be broadly redistributed. I took part in the *Ubdöwarã* rituals at the Belém village, as I had been included in the new mature men age-set. Then I “redistributed” some food I received to an age-set of older men who are the “sponsors” of my age-set.

The etiquette says that one should give food to his “sponsors” and especially to his own “sponsor”, a member of an alternate and older age-set who belongs to the opposite exogamous moiety. I myself used to ask and receive food from the teenagers by this prerogative.

Even before that, I had always responded positively to the glad claims for food and other gifts that one man from the Belém village – Alfredo, my own particular “sponsor” – used to make. I was adopted by him in a moment I can't precise – even though I had never participate in such rituals before –, when I started to respond to his claims and he started to help me getting along in the village. The help service and the gift giving create at present a relationship which should already exist.

Well, this very man, when criticizing the *waradzu* lateness in their healthcare services (he is the village's “nurse” and was worried about the lack of insulin in the local health centre), calling *waradzu* “liars”, as I protested saying I was not a liar, he answered: “But you are *a'uwẽ*, you are *rópsõ'wa*!” (*rópsõ'wa* stands for “godchild” or “protege” in the age-set system).

In a different situation, the same man would call me *waradzu* to the others, with some discretion. Also every one would do the same, with much less discretion, depending on the situation. For instance, during moments of dispute and competition. During hunting, when exogamous moieties

compete for game; or during game playing (volleyball, football) when teams are formed by the criterion of age, dwelling etc. (see Vianna 2001 and 2008 for the many ways of football team making among the Xavante). Mostly they would not call it to my face, but say it about me to the other Xavante, though knowing I was there to hear it. Children would call it to my face more easily.

Back to the ancestors and the relation between the past and the present, it should be said that there might be some kind of analogy between forbearers and foreigners. The forbearers are the reference in Xavante tradition, but their position in relation to the present people may have some similarities to the position of some animals, foreigners and other beings.

Dreaming is a Xavante way to get in contact with the ancestors. For the Xavante, dreaming is not simply imagination (or an “unconscious” expression of the self, as modern psychoanalysis would consider it) but an actual trip of the person to the outside, something like “going out sleeping”. Or, we could say, there is no difference between imagination and reality in this case.

Graham has already shown the link between dreaming, ritual and performance, in her work about Warodi, an old man from the Pimentel Barbosa village (the main village of the area of Pimentel Barbosa) (Graham 2003 [1995]). Warodi had a dream about the ancestors, which was staged in a ritual performance intending to identify himself and his people to the real Xavante ancestors. While the dream was staged before the anthropologist, it was also re-elaborated by the participation of other elders and young actors who, by this way, also re-elaborate what was past, including in it elements of the present situation. The preparations and actions of the ritual personifiers, and even the firecrackers people were bursting at that party, were retro-projected to the images of the dream (Graham 2003 [1995]: 137-208).

But there are other dreams about other people, too. Vianna recalls the narrative about Jerônimo Xavante and his dream about Jesus Christ, collected and written by Giaccaria and Heide (1991[1975]). Jerônimo had dreamed of Jesus telling him that the Xavante should *continue* to play their *traditional* log races. Such dream and its narrative express that the “meaning of cultural continuity goes, so to speak, from the mouth of a *waradzu* symbolical potency [Jesus Christ] to an *a'uwẽ*'s ear, and then to the collectivity” (Vianna 2001: 99-100, my translation).

In my field experience, people told me dreams not only about ancestors, like “grandparents”, and

about deceased relatives (like “cousins”), but about animals too. The chief of Abelhinha village once taught the young men a song he heard in a dream about a dog. The dog had been his own pet, killed by his wife some time ago. In the dream, the dog appeared in a dog like body, but danced around with other dogs while singing that he didn't know why he had been killed. The man told me that he was yet trying to understand how a dog could sing and dance that way! At the Belém village an age-set comrade of mine told me that the song he was teaching the teenagers was captured when he dreamed about a tortoise who was singing at the village's center by noon...

Thus, the person who appears in a dream and teaches songs can be a forbearer, an outsider or even an animal, and these songs are transmitted as elements of Xavante tradition.

This may be true about other forms of knowledge as well. Lopes da Silva realized that, for the Xavante tradition, also the *remedies and medicines are captured outside*. She collected stories and testimonials which tell how medicines were discovered by watching injured animals to seek certain plants for their maladies. Therapies are learned in the encounter with beings of the forest and other domains. “The world of the white people”, the “non-indians”, says Lopes da Silva, “is one of these domains in which there are knowledge and resources to seek”. The *school*, as a 'white' institution, also occupies this place where knowledge from the outside is “incorporated and internally socialized” (2002: 45-46, my translation).

### **Time Lines and Time Circles**

Now I might punctuate some theoretical perspectives of my work with the Xavante and give the reader a glance of some basis for the propositions I make here.

The symbolism about dualism, the village circle (and semi-circle, in the Xavante case), its periphery and the outside world has had comprehensive analysis in the studies about the Xavante, among other Jê and Central Brazil's peoples (Maybury-Lewis 1979, Lopes da Silva 1983). Elsewhere (Falleiros 2005) I essayed to schematize Xavante relations, gifts and symbolical economy in a “ternary dualism” created by the tension between “diametrical” and “concentric” dualisms (Lévi-Strauss 1975 [1958]). My analysis was based on theories about “reciprocity circles” (Sahlins, Ingold, Gregory), the “symbolic economy of predation” argument (Viveiros de Castro, Anne-Cristine Taylor) and a rereading of the maussian gift and symbolism theory (Mauss, Caillé, Godbout, Lanna,

França Filho etc.) with a special attention to the role of *time*, which separates the acts of giving, receiving and retribution. Tradition is treated, then, as gift – a gift which states the debt to the past and a *remaking* of past symbolic alliances by present alliances. Considering the “techniques of the body” (Mauss 2003), it is also embodied knowledge, ritually *performed*. “Performance” here is understood not only as drama, ritual and play (Turner 1975, 1986) staged in the present to articulate elements from the past (Dawsey 2005). It is also understood as “performative enunciation” (Austin 1975 [1962]), if we may extend the meaning of “enunciation” to all symbolic manifestation. So *performative tradition* can be conceived as an action which transforms the reality of present and past, one affecting the other.

This quick introduction to my theoretical questions about Xavante circularity, gift and tradition, my field data, and other ethnologists formulations too, led me to conclude that Xavante tradition can be taken as captured from the outside, internalized and then redistributed by the inside instances. And this is quite the same thing that Carneiro da Cunha says about Amazonian people in general: knowledge is conceived as something “borrowed” and incorporated, having its origin in the exteriority (Carneiro da Cunha 2004).

Thus, back to the present data – relating the Xavante/Japanese encounter and the presence of this researcher in it –, the center of the village may be considered as a place where *mediated* knowledge, already captured and internalized by the Xavante, is staged and presented. Outside the village, in its borders (where the school is placed too), *immediate* knowledge is captured.

So it is coherent that school teachers and their little students staged their rituals in the center of the village for the Japanese medicine students. And that the school was chosen as the place to stage the medical examinations that the Japanese offered. The first rituals were like the welcoming gift from the village (and from those who were conceived as recipients of the foreigners' wisdom) to outsiders. And the examination rituals presented by the Japanese were staged at the school, situated outside the village semi-circle, as interventions from the outside.

Nevertheless, if the “center” of the village is an “inside” space, it can also be an “outside” channel. The Xavante notion of “center” can be considered as an inside projection of the outside, as their cosmogony corroborates: Eid, with the Xavante elders, concludes that the Xavante consider “origin” as an external point (cosmologically and even geographically conceived) that retro-projects itself to

the very inner center of their lives (Eid et alii 2002). This also helps us to understand the Xavante village semi-circle as a way to make its non-closed center a place of relation between the inside and the outside. So this can be a place where relations with foreigners are staged, foreigners such as the Japanese or myself. So this was the place where Japanese polo shirt gifts to the Xavante were taken by the village chief and distributed to the rituals' actors and to the Xavante spectators too (women included), or where the Japanese competed against the Xavante in the crook game.

But not only space is at stake. The association of a foreigner, like me, to forbearers' difference markers such as the paintings and the dance I played, suggests a “short-circuit” between inside/outside space and present/past time.

Elizabeth Ewart states similar arguments about circularity (and linearity) to the Panará (another central Brazil's Jê speaking people), relating this not only to village space but especially to time (2003). She also argues that their binary oppositions do not relate “culture” and “nature” but “selves” and “others”. Operating such oppositions, Panará villages are images of time and transformation. The “center” is relative, and foreigners can occupy such a place too. The consequent centrality of “white people's” football game inside the Panará village (Ewart 2003: 272) is similar to that of football in Xavante's village and life, as Vianna has shown (2001, 2008).

Now let us go back to my presence on the Xavante theater of traditional operations. Of course my participation in the rituals may be taken “simply” as an adoption of a foreigner into the “right” way of being a “human” (*a'uwẽ*). So one might say that they are not “confusing” me with an ancestor. That is true, there is no such “confusion”. So I am a person to become: there might be a never-ending *linear axis* of me *becoming* an “*a'uwẽ*”. Which is related to becoming a relative: not only an “affine” (*si're'wa*) but, firstly, a “son” (*da'rá*), a “young brother” (*dano*), even a “father”/ “father's brother” (*damama*, *damama 'amõ*)<sup>4</sup> and so on, that is, a member of a lineage inside an exogamous moiety (the *Poredza'ono* moiety, in my case).

If my painting and dancing should not be taken as a source of past knowledge for them, it may be said that I would be a source of power, a power that could act in a ritual such as the cure ritual (as I danced *only* the *Wai'a* dance, related to outside powers as shown before). There is a similitude of

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<sup>4</sup> The Xavante terms for “sun”, “brother's sun” and “father brother's sun's sun” are the same: *da'rá* (*ĩ'rá* would be the self-oriented way to say it: “my sun”). Also, one may call “*ĩmama*” for his “father” and his “father's brothers” - *'amõ* stands for “other”: *ĩmama 'amõ* may be translated as “my other father”.

relation that puts forbearers and foreigners as *sources*. A similitude of a distance in time to a distance in space, a distance which would be overcome by tying its ends together, so one *circular axis* would be made<sup>5</sup>. But maybe this distance shall be never completely overcome, so the village ring shall still be opened as a semi-circle.

## Captive Appearances

In her text about Xavante shows of traditional rituals to foreign audiences, Graham claims that in such “authenticity” shows there would be quite multiple and complex objectives guiding peoples actions.

With the help from the Maussian thought, I would say that if there would be, in a gift giving situation, some kind of interest by the donor, there would be also some disinterest (Falleiros 2005). For the gift to create a bond, the time and the uncertainty between the debt and the retribution must exist.

This view of rituals and “total social facts” also consider the expenditure, the mere show-off and its importance to the honour as a form of recognition.

So if there is a Xavante interest in receiving the Japanese students visit, their examinations and their gifts, this interest may be not in the actual “utility” of such gains, but in the symbolic power held by such gifts. This could be the same power that is shown when a *waradzu* like me dances painted like them and becomes their relative<sup>6</sup>. Or even the same power that is shown when they are up to the “proper” use of the *waradzu* clothes. This is *the power to bind*, which, for the Xavante (and probably for many other Amerindians) is *the power to capture*. In this case, it is a live capture, interested in mediation “objects” for the live body (like clothing or shirts), “objects” that may keep them healthy, and interested in live people that may once again reciprocate their acceptance with much other peaceful gifts. It is a way to embody and incorporate the other without killing or eating him, a way to incorporate the other alive.

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<sup>5</sup> I would notice a really closed circular axis in Xavante time, tradition and gift giving: one which operates the age-set system (Falleiros 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Ethnology history shows I’m not the only one: for the Xavante, the first ethnologist adopted as a son was David Maybury-Lewis (1984 [1967]) – their first ethnographer. For instance, Hipãridi still refers to Maybury-Lewis as one of the family, and to Aracy Lopes da Silva as his “aunt”. In the videos Xavante record of their rituals, we can also see one or two *waradzu* playing their tradition as well.

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